

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
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FM AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7700
INFO USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY MUSCAT
AMEMBASSY SANA
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER
CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEHRAN 03218

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PINT PGOV PEPR YS IZ IR MU
SUBJ: SOME THOUGHTS ON SOUTH YEMEN

REF: TEHRAN 1409, TEHRAN 1611, JIDDA 1372, SANA 0878,
LONDON 5031 (ALL NOTAL)

1. DURING RECENT ORIENTATION VISIT TO SAUDI ARABIA AND OMAN
POLCOUNS HAD OCCASION TO DISCUSS PDRY IN LIGHT OF EXPRESSIONS
OF SERIOUS CONCERN IN FEBRUARY BY FOREIGN MINISTER KHALATBARY
TO THE AMBASSADOR HERE (TEHRAN REFTELS) AND ECHOES FROM
IRANIAN MILITARY ATTACHE IN JIDDA (JIDDA REFTEL). IRANIAN
AMBASSADOR RAED IN JIDDA, WHO IS AN OLD SAUDI HAND AND SOURCE
OF MOST MFA THINKING ON SAUDI ARABIA, SAID HE HAD BEEN TOLD
BY SAUDI FOREIGN MINISTER PRINCE SAUD ABOUT A MONTH OR SO AGO
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THAT PDRY AND IRAQ WERE GETTING MORE AGRESSIVE IN THE AREA.
RAED PROVIDED NOTHING MORE SPECIFIC ON WHAT IRAQIS MIGHT BE
DOING, BUT NOTED PDRY IS INCREASING ITS ARMY TO 40,000,
ADDIGN SOME 18,000 WHO WOULD BE "COMMANDOS."

2. AT THE SAME TIME, SAUD TOLD THE IRANIAN AMBASSADOR THAT,
IN LINE WITH CUTOFF OF SAUDI FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO PDRY,

SAUDI TROOPS HAVE BEEN PULLED BACK AND ARE NO LONGER INTERPOSED BETWEEN SOUTH YEMEN EXILES AND PDRY TROOPS AT SAUDI-PDRY BORDER. THEREFORE, EXILES ARE ABLE TO CARRY OUT RAIDS ACROSS THE BORDER, AND THESE ARE SOMETIMES RECIPROCATED BY PDRY TROOPS. (COMMENT: AMBASSADOR DID NOT SEEM DISPOSED TO DRAW POSSIBLY OBVIOUS CONCLUSION THAT PDRY MILITARY BUILDUP MAY BE DEFENSIVE IN NATURE INTENDED TO PREVENT RETURN OF SOUTH YEMENI EXILES FROM SAUDI TERRITORY TO SOUTH YEMEN.)

3. SOMEWHAT INCONSISTENTLY, SAUDI MFA DIRECTOR FOR ASIA AND AFRICA IN LATER DISCUSSION SAME DAY WAS RELAXED ON WHOLE QUESTION OF PDRY AND DID NOT APPEAR TO HAVE HEARD OF ANY NEW IRAQI EFFORTS IN THE AREA. PERHAPS HE WAS BEING CAUTIOUS OR WAS UNINFORMED, BUT THIS CALM WAS OUT OF KEEPING WITH HIS EXPRESSION OF SERIOUS CONCERN OVER SITUATION IN THE HORN OF AFRICA.

4. BRIEFINGS FROM CHIEF OF STAFF AND OTHER BRITISH OFFICERS SERVING WITH SULTAN'S ARMED FORCES IN OMAN BROUGHT HOME THE BASIC HOSTILITY OF TERRAIN AND WEATHER CONDITIONS IN THE DHOFAR. BRITISH OFFICERS OPINED ANY MOVEMENT OF SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF TROOPS ACROSS PDRY BORDERS INTO DHOFAR WOULD BE A MAJOR ENTERPRISE WITH GIGANTIC LOGISTIC PROBLEMS AS THE TROOPS GOT FURTHER AND FURTHER FROM THEIR BASES IN PDRY, ESPECIALLY IF OMANIS CONTINUE TO CONTROL THE AIR. THEREFORE OFFICERS TENDED TO DISCOUNT POSSIBILITY OF CROSS-BORDER OPERATIONS BY CONFIDENTIAL

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CUBANS, IRAQIS, OR ANY OTHER TROOPS IN SIGNIFICANT NUMBERS, THOUGH THEY WERE PREPARED TO ACCEPT POSSIBILITY OF A REOPENING OF THE DHOFAR INSURRECTION BY PDRY-TRAINED LOCAL CADRES.

5. THROUGHOUT ALL THESE CONVERSATIONS REFERENCE WAS MADE IN A GENERAL WAY TO THE PROBABLE STRENGTHENING OF SOVIET INFLUENCE IN PDRY AND THE WEAKENING OF PRESIDENT SALIM RUBAY'I-ALI'S POSITION BY PRO-SOVIET SUPPORTERS OF ABDUL FATAH ISMA'IL. IRANIAN AMBASSADOR EVEN SUGGESTED SAUDIS EXPECT SALIM RUBAY'I-ALI'S OUSTER IN PARTY ELECTIONS SCHEDULED FOR THIS JUNE.

6. UPON RETURNING TO TEHRAN, POLCOUNS GOT THE SAME GENERAL KIND OF CONCERN EXPRESSED BY MFA DEPARTMENT HEAD FOR THE AREA, WHO ONCE SERVED AS AMBASSADOR RAED'S DEPUTY IN JIDDA. NO FURTHER DETAILS WERE PROVIDED, HOWEVER, AND OUR IMPRESSION WAS ONCE AGAIN OF RUMORS AND EXAGGERATED REPORTS WHICH SO OFTEN FLOOD THIS PART OF THE WORLD. THIS IMPRESSION IS HEIGHTENED BY FACT NEITHER FOREIGN MINISTER KHALATBARY NOR HIS CHIEF DEPUTY HAVE RAISED THESE ISSUES AGAIN WITH THE AMBASSADOR IN RECENT WEEKS.

7. COMMENT: OUR GENERAL IMPRESSION IS OF NEW CONCERN

AMONG CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENTS IN THIS AREA SUCH AS THE
IRANIANS, SAUDIS AND PERHAPS THE OMANIS. BUT NOBODY HAS
ANY NEW FACTS, AND SPECULATION OFTEN RUNS IN MUTUALLY CONTRA-
DICTORY DIRECTIONS. IT WOULD APPEAR THAT SOME OF THESE
REPORTS HAVE BEEN FEEDING ON EACH OTHER, WITH EVEN BRITISH
SOURCES IN ADEN AND ELSEWHERE NO BETTER OFF THAN WE ARE IN
FATHOMING PROSPECTS FOR NEW PDRY OR IRAQI AGRESSIVENESS IN
THE AREA.

8. ADDRESSEES' COMMENTS ARE INVITED.

9. DECONTROL 1-1-1990.
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